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E. De la Garza

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news release

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HOUSE-PASSED RURAL DEVELOPMENT BILL CONTAINS DE LA GARZA PROVISION FOR COLONIA WATER PROJECTS

For immediate release, March 22, 1990

(PR90-039)

WASHINGTON -- A special provision to help bring running water and sewer services to residents of colonias along the U.S.-Mexico border was included in a major rural development bill passed by the House of Representatives Thursday, announced House Agriculture Committee Chairman E (Kika) de la Garza, D-Tex., author of the provision.

Rep. de la Garza's provision, if enacted into law, will authorize funding for the construction of water and waste systems to serve colonias and other severely economically-distressed communities. The provision was included in H.R. 3581, the Rural Economic Development Act of 1990, which passed the House on a 360-45 roll call vote.

"The provision I had included in the rural development bill continues our commitment at the Federal level to improve life for our colonia residents. The lack of proper water and waste systems in many colonias poses a health risk to residents, especially children, and it's bad for our environment," Rep. de la Garza said.

"If this measure is enacted into law, we can bring running water to the residents of many colonias and eliminate the threat of disease and environmental hazards. I am deeply appreciative of my colleagues on the House Agriculture Committee and on the House floor, including our border neighbors, Congressmen Solomon Ortiz, Albert Bustamante, and Ronald Coleman, who strongly supported my efforts," he added.

The de la Garza provision authorizes \$30 million in grants and \$30 million in loans to provide water and waste facilities and services to communities around the nation whose residents face significant health risks due to the lack of an adequate, affordable water supply system or waste disposal facilities.

The legislation directs the Secretary of Agriculture to give funding preference to projects serving "those rural subdivisions commonly referred to as colonias, that are characterized by substandard housing, inadequate roads and drainage, and a lack of adequate water or waste facilities."

To qualify, projects must be slated to serve residents of counties with a per capita income of less than 70 percent of the national average and an unemployment rate of at least 125 percent of the national average. The Secretary can award loans and grants to rural water supply corporations, cooperatives, public agencies or individuals.

The Senate passed its own version of rural development legislation last September. Differences between the House and Senate bills will have to be ironed out before the final package is sent to the President.

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